

With respect to the rejection of claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, the claim has been corrected to clarify the antecedent basis for "the centering element," so this rejection should be withdrawn.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-6 as anticipated by Fry, et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,017,233 ("Fry"), under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e).

The Examiner also rejected claims 1-3, and 6 as anticipated by Kato, et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,155,857 ("Kato"), under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e).

Finally, the Examiner rejected claims 4 and 5 as being unpatentable over Kato, et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,155,857 ("Kato"), under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a),

The 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) rejection should be withdrawn

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Fry, et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,017,233 ("Fry"). However, to reject a claim under 35 U.S.C. § 102, the Office must demonstrate that each and every claim limitation is identically disclosed in a single prior art reference. (*See Scripps Clinic & Research Foundation v. Genentech, Inc.*, 18 U.S.P.Q.2d 1001, 1010 (Fed. Cir. 1991)). "The identical invention must be shown in as complete detail as is contained in the claim." M.P.E.P. § 2131. For the reasons that follow, this rejection of claims 1-6 should be withdrawn.

The rejection of independent claim 1 should be withdrawn because Fry does not disclose each and every limitation identically. Claim 1 recites "a plug connector having a guide element" and "a mating connector having a recess." Fry, however, discloses "a floating panel mount system for mounting an electrical connector to a panel." Col. 1, ll. 5-8. The "electrical connector" of Fry, as opposed to the "panel," is "part of a larger, unitarily molded dielectric housing, generally designated 28." Col. 3, ll. 26-27; see also Fig. 1. The dielectric housing has a mating portion which is adapted to pass through an aperture in the panel and mate with a complementary connecting device, designated "20" in figure 1. Col. 3, ll. 28-31.

According to the Examiner, Fry teaches "a mating connector (18, 20, 22) having a recess (58)." Applicants respectfully submit that the mating connector does not have a recess. See Fig. 1. The recess (58) is found on a "retaining cap" (see Col. 3, ll. 63-65) which is adapted to be engaged with the front side of the panel (Col. 3, ll. 60-61), not the mating connector. Consequently, Fry does not teach a mating connector with a recess.

Because Fry fails to show the identical invention "in as complete detail as is contained in the claim" (M.P.E.P. § 2131), the rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn. Because claims 2-6 depend from claim 1, it is respectfully submitted that those claims are allowable for at least the same reasons that base claim 1 is allowable.

The Examiner also rejected claims 1-3, and 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Kato, et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,155,857 ("Kato"). However, as noted above, to reject a claim under 35 U.S.C. § 102, the Office must demonstrate that each and every claim limitation is identically disclosed in a single prior art reference. (*See Scripps Clinic & Research Foundation v. Genentech, Inc.*, 18 U.S.P.Q.2d 1001, 1010 (Fed. Cir. 1991)) and that "[t]he identical invention" is "shown in as complete detail as is contained in the claim." M.P.E.P. § 2131. For the reasons that follow, this rejection of claims 1-3 and 6 should be withdrawn.

The rejection of independent claim 1 should be withdrawn because Kato does not disclose each and every limitation identically. Claim 1 recites "a plug connector having a guide element" and "a mating connector having a recess." According to claim 1, "in an inserted state, the recess is set apart from the guide element." Kato, however, does not teach such a "recess." Kato discloses "guide-holes (14)" which are not "set apart from the guide element." In fact, the guide-holes of Kato are shaped to be increasingly narrow and closely fit to the guide element; according to Kato, "[t]o realize the self alignment mechanism described above, inner diameters of the tip portions (16) of the guide-holes (14) are made larger than the inner diameter of the guide-holes (14)." Col. 4, ll. 57-60; see also Fig. 1. Consequently, "the tip portions (17) of the guide-pins (24) will usually contact the inner walls of the guide-holes." Col. 4, ll. 41-43. Plainly, in an inserted state, the recess of Kato is not set apart from the guide element, and Kato teaches away from the recess of claim 1 being "set apart from the guide element" in the inserted state. See M.P.E.P. § 2145.X.D.1 ("A prior art reference that 'teaches away' from the claimed invention is a significant factor to be considered in determining obviousness"). Therefore, Kato fails to show the identical invention "in as complete detail as is contained in the claim." M.P.E.P. § 2131. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 1 based on Kato should be withdrawn. Because claims 2-3 and claim 6 depend from claim 1, it is respectfully submitted that those claims are allowable over Kato for at least the same reasons that base claim 1 is allowable.

The 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection should be withdrawn

The Examiner rejected claims 4 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Kato, et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,155,857 ("Kato"). However, "[t]o establish *prima facie* obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art." M.P.E.P. § 2143.03. Because the Office has not demonstrated that Kato teaches or suggests all the claim limitations of claim 1, and because claims 4 and 5 depend from claim 1, the Office has not demonstrated that Kato teaches or suggests all the claim limitations of claims 4 and 5. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that rejection of claims 4 and 5 be withdrawn.

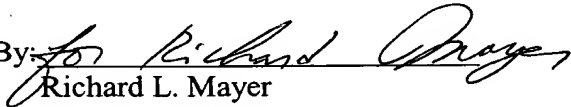
As noted above, Kato teaches the recess becoming increasingly narrow in the inserted state (Col. 4, ll. 57-60) such that the guide element "usually contacts the inner walls" of the recess (Col. 4, ll. 41-43). Accordingly, Kato teaches away from the recess of claim 1 being "set apart from the guide element" in the inserted state. Because claims 4 and 5 depend from claim 1, and therefore contain all of the limitations of claim 1, Kato teaches away from claims 4 and 5 as well. As a result, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claims 4 and 5.

CONCLUSION


In view of all of the above, it is believed that the rejection of claims 1-6 have been obviated, and that all of claims 1 to 6 are allowable. It is therefore respectfully requested that the rejections be withdrawn and that the present application issue as early as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

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Version with markings to show changes made

In the Claims:

5. (Amended) The connector according to claim [3] 4, wherein the centering element has a lug-like form.